



National Council for  
State Authorization  
Reciprocity Agreements

*A voluntary, regional approach  
to state oversight of distance education*

Institution Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Indicate Regional Compact:**

- Midwestern Higher Education Compact
- New England Board of Higher Education
- Southern Regional Education Board
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

## APPLICATION AND APPROVAL FORM FOR INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION IN SARA

**An Institution applying to operate under the State  
Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) must submit this  
form to its Home State's SARA Portal Entity.**

**The chief executive officer (CEO) or chief academic officer (CAO) of the Institution completes and submits the application including any State-specific fees and committing to any special requirements of the SARA State Portal Entity permitted by SARA.**

When the State Portal Entity checks "yes" on this form, the State affirms that the applicant Institution has followed proper procedures and provided necessary documents to operate under SARA, but this affirmation does not necessarily represent State evaluation of the Institution's ability to perform under SARA policies.

An Institution seeking approval to operate under the policies of SARA must meet the following requirements:

**Institution Applicant to  
complete this column**

**State Entity to  
complete this column**

CEO or CAO initial here

Institution meets  
the requirement

Yes      No

- |       |   |                          |                          |
|-------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ | 1. The main campus or central administrative unit is located in a SARA Member State and is authorized to operate in that State. *Only distance education content offered under the oversight authority of a SARA Member State is eligible to be offered under SARA.** (See attached documentation.)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 2. The Institution is a U.S. degree-granting Institution that is accredited by an Accrediting Agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and whose scope of authority, as specified by the Department, includes distance education. (See attached documentation.)   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 3. For non-public Institutions, the Institution's most recent financial responsibility index score from the U.S. Department of Education is 1.5 or above, or, if the score is between 1.0 and 1.49, the State Portal Entity can affirm that documentation has been provided to demonstrate financial stability sufficient to justify Institutional participation in SARA. If an Institution is owned by a "corporate parent," the composite score of its "parent" must meet these requirements. NOTE: Public Institutions leave this blank. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Institutional Application for SARA**

**Institution Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Institution Applicant to complete this column

State Entity to complete this column

CEO or CAO initial here

Yes No

- |       |   |                          |                          |
|-------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| _____ | 4. The Institution agrees to abide by the <i>Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education</i> and policies of the <i>SARA Manual</i> .   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 5. The Institution agrees to be responsible for the actions of any third-party providers used by the Institution to operate under SARA.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 6. The Institution agrees to notify its Home State’s SARA Portal Entity of any negative changes to its accreditation status.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 7. The Institution agrees to provide data necessary to monitor SARA activities, including annual reporting of distance education enrollments and out-of-state learning placements disaggregated by State, in accordance with NC-SARA policies.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 8. The Institution agrees to work with its Home State’s SARA Portal Entity to resolve any complaints arising from its students in SARA States, and to abide by decisions of that entity regarding resolution of such complaints. ***  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 9. The Institution agrees to apply for SARA participation to its Home State’s Portal Entity over the signature of the Institution’s chief executive officer or chief academic officer.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 10. The Institution agrees to notify in writing all students in a course or program that customarily leads to professional licensure, or which a student could reasonably believe leads to such licensure, whether or not the course or program meets educational requirements for licensure in the State where the student is located. <i>After making all reasonable efforts to make such a determination</i> , the Institution may notify the applicant or student in writing that the Institution cannot confirm whether the course or program meets educational requirements for professional licensure in the student's State provide the student with current contact information for any applicable licensing boards, and advise the student to determine whether the program meets educational requirements for licensure in the State where the student lives. An email dedicated solely to this purpose and sent to the student's best known email address meets this requirement. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|       | The Institution should use other additional means to notify the student, if needed.   |                          |                          |
| _____ | 11. The Institution agrees that in cases where the Institution cannot fully deliver the instruction for which a student has contracted, it will provide a reasonable alternative for delivering the instruction or reasonable financial compensation for the education the student did not receive.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 12. The Institution agrees to pay to its Home State any State fees for SARA participation required by the Home State for administering SARA.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 13. The Institution agrees to pay its annual SARA participation fee to the National Council for SARA (NC-SARA).   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| _____ | 14. The Institution agrees to abide by conditions of provisional approval, if necessary.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

\*SARA considers the Home campus to be where an Institution has its legal domicile. Any disputes about which State is the Home State will be resolved for SARA purposes by the affected regional compacts or the National Council (NC-SARA), as needed.

\*\*The fact that a foreign Institution is owned by a U.S. entity does not qualify distance education originating from the non-U.S. Institution to be offered under SARA. Only distance education offerings under the oversight of a SARA Member State can be offered through SARA.

\*\*\*Complaints must follow the Institution’s customary resolution procedure prior to being referred to the State under SARA procedures. Grade appeals and student conduct appeals are not allowed under SARA.

# Institutional Application for SARA

## Institutional Designation and Affirmation

I, the undersigned representative of (Institution name) \_\_\_\_\_  
having the authority to commit the Institution to operate under the SARA interstate agreement, hereby certify  
that this Institution meets all of the policies stated herein required for operation by the *SARA Manual*.

Mailing address of Institution:

Institution OPEID number:

Institutional Accrediting Agency:

Institution FTE (latest IPEDS): \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

- Institution with fewer than 2,500 FTE students
- Institution with between 2,501 and 9,999 FTE students
- Institution with more than 10,000 FTE students

Name of principal SARA contact:

Title of principal SARA contact:

Email of principal SARA contact:

Phone number of principal SARA contact:

Name of secondary SARA contact:

Title of secondary SARA contact:

Email of secondary SARA contact:

Phone number of secondary SARA contact:

Link to SARA student complaint system:

Type of Institution:     public                       private non-profit                       private for-profit  
                                  tribal college                       other (describe: \_\_\_\_\_ )

Federal Financial Composite Score (NOTE: Public Institutions leave this blank.)

Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Year reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the Institution owned by another entity?     Yes     No

If yes, list official owner name:

If yes, owner address:

## **Institutional Application for SARA**

Additional campus information:

Name(s) and locations of other campuses to be included in this SARA application:

Name of SARA contact at each campus location:

Email of SARA contact at each campus location:

**Institutional Application for SARA**

**Institutional Designation and Affirmation, cont.**

Typed name of Institutional signatory officer:

Title of signatory Institutional officer:

*The chief executive officer (CEO) or chief academic officer (CAO) of the Institution completes and submits the application.*

Signature:

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Date signed:

## Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education 2011

Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC)

### 1. Online learning is appropriate to the institution's mission and purposes.

*Analysis/Evidence: \*\*\*\**

- The mission statement explains the role of online learning within the range of the institution's programs and services;
- Institutional and program statements of vision and values inform how the online learning environment is created and supported;
- As appropriate, the institution incorporates into its online learning programs methods of meeting the stated institutional goals for the student experience at the institution;
- The recruitment and admissions programs supporting the online learning courses and programs appropriately target the student populations to be served;
- The students enrolled in the institution's online learning courses and programs fit the admissions requirements for the students the institution intends to serve;
- Senior administrators and staff can articulate how online learning is consonant with the institution's mission and goals.

### 2. The institution's plans for developing, sustaining, and, if appropriate, expanding online learning offerings are integrated into its regular planning and evaluation processes.

*Analysis/Evidence:*

- Development and ownership of plans for online learning extend beyond the administrators directly responsible for it and the programs directly using it;
- Planning documents are explicit about any goals to increase numbers of programs provided through online learning courses and programs and/or numbers of students to be enrolled in them;
- Plans for online learning are linked effectively to budget and technology planning to ensure adequate support for current and future offerings;
- Plans for expanding online learning demonstrate the institution's capacity to assure an appropriate level of quality;
- The institution and its online learning programs have a track record of conducting needs analysis and of supporting programs.

*\*\*\*\*These bulleted points illustrate actions, processes and facts that Institutions may use to demonstrate that they meet SARA requirements.*

### **3. Online learning is incorporated into the institution's systems of governance and academic oversight.**

#### *Analysis/Evidence:*

- The institution's faculty have a designated role in the design and implementation of its online learning offerings;
- The institution ensures the rigor of the offerings and the quality of the instruction;
- Approval of online courses and programs follows standard processes used in the college or university;
- Online learning courses and programs are evaluated on a periodic basis;
- Contractual relationships and arrangements with consortial partners, if any, are clear and guarantee that the institution can exercise appropriate responsibility for the academic quality of all online learning offerings provided under its name.

### **4. Curricula for the institution's online learning offerings are coherent, cohesive, and comparable in academic rigor to programs offered in traditional instructional formats.**

#### *Analysis/Evidence:*

- The curricular goals and course objectives show that the institution or program has knowledge of the best uses of online learning in different disciplines and settings;
- Curricula delivered through online learning are benchmarked against on-ground courses and programs, if provided by the institution, or those provided by traditional institutions;
- The curriculum is coherent in its content and sequencing of courses and is effectively defined in easily available documents including course syllabi and program descriptions;
- Scheduling of online learning courses and programs provides students with a dependable pathway to ensure timely completion of degrees;
- The institution or program has established and enforces a policy on online learning course enrollments to ensure faculty capacity to work appropriately with students;
- Expectations for any required face-to-face, on-ground work (e.g., internships, specialized laboratory work) are stated clearly;
- Course design and delivery supports student-student and faculty-student interaction;
- Curriculum design and the course management system enable active faculty contribution to the learning environment;
- Course and program structures provide schedule and support known to be effective in helping online learning students persist and succeed.

### **5. The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its online learning offerings, including the extent to which the online learning goals are achieved, and uses the results of its evaluations to enhance the attainment of the goals.**

#### *Analysis/Evidence:*

- Assessment of student learning follows processes used in onsite courses or programs and/or reflects good practice in assessment methods;
- Student course evaluations are routinely taken and an analysis of them contributes to strategies for course improvements;
- Evaluation strategies ensure effective communication between faculty members who design curriculum, faculty members who interact with students, and faculty members who evaluate student learning;
- The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the academic and support services provided to students in online courses and uses the results for improvement;
- The institution demonstrates the appropriate use of technology to support its assessment strategies;

- The institution documents its successes in implementing changes informed by its programs of assessment and evaluation;
- The institution provides examples of student work and student interactions among themselves and with faculty;
- The institution sets appropriate goals for the retention/persistence of students using online learning, assesses its achievement of these goals, and uses the results for improvement.

**6. Faculty responsible for delivering the online learning curricula and evaluating the students' success in achieving the online learning goals are appropriately qualified and effectively supported.**

*Analysis/Evidence:*

- Online learning faculties are carefully selected, appropriately trained, frequently evaluated, and are marked by an acceptable level of turnover;
- The Institution's training program for online learning faculty is periodic, incorporates tested good practices in online learning pedagogy, and ensures competency with the range of software products used by the Institution;
- Faculty are proficient and effectively supported in using the course management system;
- The office or persons responsible for online learning training programs are clearly identified and have the competencies to accomplish the tasks, including knowledge of the specialized resources and technical support available to support course development and delivery;
- Faculty members engaged in online learning share in the mission and goals of the institution and its programs and are provided the opportunities to contribute to the broader activities of the Institution;
- Students express satisfaction with the quality of the instruction provided by online learning faculty members.

**7. The Institution provides effective student and academic services to support students enrolled in online learning offerings.**

*Analysis/Evidence:*

- The institution's admissions program for online learning provides good web-based information to students about the nature of the online learning environment, and assists them in determining if they possess the skills important to success in online learning;
- The institution provides an online learning orientation program;
- The institution provides support services to students in formats appropriate to the delivery of the online learning program;
- Students in online learning programs have adequate access to student services, including financial aid, course registration, and career and placement counseling;
- Students in online learning programs have ready access to 24/7 tech support;
- Students using online learning have adequate access to learning resources, including library, information resources, laboratories, and equipment and tracking systems;
- Students using online learning demonstrate proficiency in the use of electronic forms of learning resources;
- Student complaint processes are clearly defined and can be used electronically;
- Publications and advertising for online learning programs are accurate and contain necessary information such as program goals, requirements, academic calendar, and faculty;
- Students are provided with reasonable and cost-effective ways to participate in the Institution's system of student authentication.



**8. The institution provides sufficient resources to support and, if appropriate, expand its online learning offerings.**

*Analysis/Evidence:*

- The institution prepares a multi-year budget for online learning that includes resources for assessment of program demand, marketing, appropriate levels of faculty and staff, faculty and staff development, library and information resources, and technology infrastructure;
- The institution provides evidence of a multi-year technology plan that addresses its goals for online learning and includes provision for a robust and scalable technical infrastructure.

**9. The Institution assures the integrity of its online offerings.**

*Analysis/Evidence:*

- The institution has in place effective procedures through which to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The institution makes clear in writing that these processes protect student privacy and notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional costs associated with the verification procedures. (NOTE: This is a federal requirement. All institutions that offer distance education programs must demonstrate compliance with this requirement.);
- The institution's policies on academic integrity include explicit references to online learning;
- Issues of academic integrity are discussed during the orientation for online students;
- Training for faculty members engaged in online learning includes consideration of issues of academic integrity, including ways to reduce cheating.

## SARA State Supplemental Sheet for Institutions

SARA provides a degree of flexibility for States as they implement the agreement. Information about State-specific provisions may be added on this page for items such as fees (if any) to be charged in-state Institutions, criteria for consideration of appeals of Institutions having financial responsibility index scores between 1.0 and 1.49, etc.

State fee (if any):

State fee schedule:

State bonding requirement of Institution (if any):

Financial responsibility criteria for ratings 1.0-1.49:

### State Portal Entity Affirmation

Institutional application:

- Approved
- Provisionally Approved (see attached)
- Returned for Additional Data or Information
- Denied

Conditions related to Provisional Approval:

Typed name of SARA State Portal Entity contact:

Typed name of SARA State Portal Entity:

Title of SARA State Portal Entity contact:

SARA State Portal Entity email and phone:

Signature:

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Date signed: